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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Present: General Paul Ely, Ambassador Jean Daridan, Ambassador Henri Bonnet, Ambasador Georges Picot, Mr. Jacques Roux, Mr. Gabriel Van Laethem.

Admiral Felix B. Stump, General John W. O'Daniel, Mr. Leland Barrows, The Hon. H. Struve Hensel, Ambassador J. L. Collins, Colonel Kelly, Colonel Farnsworth, Mr. Randolph A. Kidder.

Subject: Status of Diem Government

Following luncheon on February 28 given in honor of Mr. Hensel, the Ambassador discussed with his guests his views on the progress made by the Diem Government and the substantial improvement in the situation during the past month to six weeks. He commented on the close French-American cooperation which had resulted in the reform plans of the Diem Government. These plans however, he said, had yet to be translated from paper into action. Referring to the 7-point French-American program in support of the Diem Government, he admitted sorrowfully that we had failed to make progress in one particular field--the broadening of the Diem Government. He mentioned the promise of Diem to take Quat into the Ministry of the Interior but the subsequent change of mind by Diem. He said that Diem advances all sorts of reasons for failing to take men like Quat into the Government, and stated his belief that the real reason is Diem's fear of letting any strong man who might endanger his, Diem's, position into the Government.

In discussing broadening the Diem Government, the Ambassador said he found it entirely natural that Diem is unwilling to take into his Government any persons who also hold French nationality and who have not been willing to renounce it. To take such people into the Government would be politically unacceptable to the Nationalists in Vietnam.

General Ely and Ambassador Bonnet said that they agreed in general with what the Ambassador had said but dissented only with regard to the possibility of taking into the Government persons who also hold French nationality. They believe that that is not an insurmountable problem and that the Vietnamese should take the example of India and use able men who have cooperated with former regimes--the British in India or the French in Indochina.

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